



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

## INSIDE

## State Department Releases 2005 Human Rights Country Reports

Countries in which power is concentrated in the hands of rulers that cannot be held accountable for their actions were among those cited as having the poorest records on human rights in the U.S. Department of State's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices released March 8.

Such regimes, which include the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea), Burma, Iran, Zimbabwe, Cuba, China and Belarus, seriously restrict fundamental human rights enshrined in the United Nations Uni-

versal Declaration of Human Rights, including freedom of speech,



**Secretary Condoleezza Rice announces the release of the State Department's 2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, March 8.**

press, assembly, association, religion and movement, the State Department said in the introduction to the report.

"The growing demand for democratic governance reflects a recognition that the best guarantor of human rights is a thriving democracy with transparent, accountable institutions of government, equal rights under the rule of law, a robust civil society, political pluralism and independent media," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in introducing the report.

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## U.S. Official Praises African Union's Counterterrorism Efforts

To win the war on terrorism, nations must work together not only to destroy enemy networks but also to encourage democratic governance rooted in rule of law, tolerance and prosperity, says Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism Henry Crumpton.



**Henry Crumpton**

He spoke February 20 to a conference in Algeria. The conference, co-sponsored by the United States, the African Union (AU), and the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, hosted country representatives with the AU's Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCI).

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## State Department Releases 2005 Human Rights Country Reports . . .

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Fulfilling the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and building lasting democracies worldwide is urgent work that cannot be delayed, Rice said. "We ... hope that the reports will be a source of information and inspiration to the noble men and women across the globe who are working for peaceful democratic change."

### REPORTS INTENDED TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY WORLDWIDE

The 2005 reports, which provide analyses of the human rights situations in 196 countries, are designed to assess human rights conditions worldwide. The reports, according to the introduction, demonstrate that the United States is committed "to working with other democracies and men and women of goodwill across the globe to reach an historic long-term goal: 'the end of tyranny in our world.'"

The introduction summarizes human rights improvements in the Balkans, Colombia and the Great Lakes region of central Africa, which encompasses the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

Although human rights violations and miscarriages of justice occur in democratic countries, "countries with democratic systems provide far greater protections against violations of human rights than do non-democratic states," according to the State Department. Further, human rights and democracy are closely linked, and both are essential to long-term stability and security.

### SOME COUNTRIES MAKING MAJOR PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2005, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Indonesia, Lebanon and Liberia made major progress toward democracy, democratic rights and freedom.

Yet a disturbing number of countries across the globe passed or selectively applied laws against the media and nongovernmental organizations, including Cambodia, China, Zimbabwe, Venezuela and Belarus. Syria refused international calls to respect the fundamental freedoms of its people and did not cooperate fully with the U.N. International Independent Investigative Commission on the assassination in Beirut of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

Russia adopted a restrictive new law on nongovernmental organizations and, by the end of 2005, all independent nationwide television stations had been taken over either by the state or by state-friendly organizations. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Feb/08-245680.html>).)

"A robust civil society and independent media help create conditions under which human rights can flourish by raising awareness among publics about their rights, exposing abuses, pressing for reform, and holding governments accountable," the State Department reported.

Countries with worsening human rights records and overall climates of lawlessness and corruption include Sudan, Nepal, Cote d'Ivoire,

Chechnya and elsewhere in Russia's Northern Caucasus region.

The purpose of the reports is not only to bring to light human rights achievements and violations but to illuminate future tasks and the potential for greater cooperation in advancing the aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The reports show human rights flourish in countries that promote democracy, said Paula J. Dobriansky, under secretary of state for democracy and global affairs.

"The furtherance of democracy, by definition, advances individual rights and freedoms by increasing people's ability to shape their government, their society and the decisions which affect their daily lives," Dobriansky said at the March 8 briefing.

Transcripts of the secretary's remarks (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/62738.htm>) and Dobriansky's briefing (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/spbr/62776.htm>) are available on the State Department Web site.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/index.htm>) of the 2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices is available on the State Department Web site.

*For more information on the reports and U.S. policy, see Human Rights ([http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human\\_rights.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights.html)).* ♦

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## Africa of Key Strategic Importance to U.S., World, Scholar Says

By Charles W. Corey  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Africa has evolved into a region of key strategic importance to the United States, China and many other countries worldwide as a supplier of energy and natural resources.

Brett D. Schaefer, a research fellow in regulatory affairs at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, made that point March 7 at a conference entitled "Chinese Influence: Expanding in Both Africa and Latin America."

The fact that both the Chinese and U.S. governments are discussing Africa, along with Latin America, as a major area for investment, Schaefer told his foreign affairs audience, clearly shows Africa's ever-growing importance. "Fifteen to 20 years ago, Africa would not have been here" as a discussion topic on such a panel, he said.

"Africa is increasingly important to the United States as a source of oil," he said. In 2005, Africa supplied the United States with 18 percent of its oil imports -- more than the United States presently imports from the Middle East.

U.S. oil imports from sub-Saharan Africa have increased by a third since 1999, while imports from the Persian Gulf have decreased. As a result, he said, "the importance of Africa as a source for petroleum and the import of oil cannot be overestimated."

Within the next decade, Schaefer predicted, Africa's oil exports will double. The scholar cited forecasts that say U.S. imports of African oil

will rise from their present level of 18 percent to 25 percent -- so one-quarter of all U.S. oil imports are expected to come from Africa in the not-too-distant future.

Increasingly, he said, instability and humanitarian crises, such as the situation in the Darfur region of Sudan, are getting more attention from the United States -- first on humanitarian grounds, but also because of strategic interests.

Additionally, he said, the War on Terror has made Africa more important. "As a battleground on the war on terror, sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly vulnerable to radical Islam, which," he said, "has been trying to spread its influence across the Sahel and eastern Africa," as evidenced by the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Additionally, he said, Africa is important because its countries make up a large bloc at the United Nations and in international fora like the World Trade Organization, and therefore merit closer attention from the United States.

### CHINA'S INFLUENCE

With regard to China's influence on Africa, Schaefer said China now has surpassed the United States as the world's largest consumer of many raw materials, ranks as the world's second-largest importer of oil and accounts for 31 percent of

growth in global oil demand -- and thus is looking to Africa for these resources.

"China's emergence as a significant player on the economic scene, with its seemingly inexhaustible demand for raw materials, natural resources and oil, presents a significant challenge for the United States," he said, since the United States "is increasingly relying on the region for a lot of these materials" as well.

China is now active in every part of Africa, Schaefer told his audience. China's national oil company, he said, is especially active in Sudan, where it has built a pipeline to the Red Sea and a refinery outside Khartoum. It also controls most of an oil field in southern Darfur.

Besides Sudan, Schaefer said, China is active in Angola, where it provided a \$2 billion aid package to secure oil rights and recently signed a crude oil purchase agreement for 30,000 barrels of oil a day for the next five years.

In Zambia, Schaefer said, China has invested \$170 million in the copper-mining sector. China is investing in cobalt and copper activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, is harvesting timber in Gabon and Liberia and is heavily involved in Zimbabwe as well.

Such a level of involvement, he said, will have broad implications for the United States now and in the future.♦



Brett D. Schaefer

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## Africa Important to Nation's Energy Security, U.S. Official Says

By Jim Fisher-Thompson and  
Bruce Greenberg  
Washington File Staff Writers

Washington -- U.S.-Africa trade ties can grow only stronger as one in five barrels of oil consumed in America in the next few decades most likely will come from the continent, says a top U.S. energy official.

Currently, 15 percent of U.S. oil imports comes from Africa, according to George Person, acting deputy assistant secretary for international energy policy at the U.S. Department of Energy. Person participated in a March 1 discussion on Africa and International Energy Security sponsored by the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation.

Sullivan was a prominent African-American minister and businessman who operated self-help programs in the United States and abroad and established an important set of ethical guidelines -- known as the Sullivan Principles -- for foreign investors and businesses operating in apartheid-era South Africa during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Person was joined on the panel by Edmund Daukoru, Nigeria's minister of state for petroleum resources and currently president of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria Howard Jeter was in the audience.

Daukoru also addressed the U.S. Chamber of Commerce March 2 on the topic of energy security.

Person told the Sullivan Foundation panel: "Close to 20 percent of

[U.S.] net oil imports are coming from Africa. Think about that. Some analysts are even forecasting that that number could increase tremendously."

In addition to oil, there are other opportunities in Africa, the U.S. official said. For example, "natural gas, particularly liquefied natural gas, is increasingly becoming more of a global commodity, and the U.S. is a major consumer of that," he said.

Certainly, there are challenges to this increased trade, Person said. But Americans, he said, must move beyond the challenges and focus on more than oil and gas. The dialogue, he said, also should be about "energy services, trade and investment, economic empowerment," as well as public and private partnerships.

Person said, "We have had very good discussions at the Department of Energy between the minister [Daukoru] and [Energy] Secretary [Samuel] Bodman, who has emphasized the importance of working with Africans" on mutual energy concerns.

As president of OPEC, Daukoru heads the organization whose 11 member nations hold two-thirds of all proven oil reserves. Its chief aim is to keep the price of oil stabilized to eliminate fluctuations that might imperil a steady income flow to its oil-producing members. Although most of the Gulf states are members, large producers like the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia are not.

Even though Nigeria is the only sub-Saharan nation in OPEC, the African energy resource base

throughout West and Southern Africa is substantial and very promising, Daukoru said. Already, he added, the United States receives about 8 percent of all its oil imports from Nigeria and 7 percent from Angola, and fields in the Gulf of Guinea area "are of increasing importance for [energy] supplies to the U.S."

African oil, he said, also has "the advantage of being light and sweet [easier to refine] and comes from the Atlantic rim, and you have investments across the Atlantic Ocean and therefore in the same [geologic] basin."

Daukoru predicted that natural gas soon will rival oil as a major energy source worldwide: "Gas has become a cleaner fuel than oil, and at least for utilities' purposes, and to some extent transportation, gas is going to rival oil. We estimate that in the next 20-25 years gas will get very close to overtaking oil" in world markets.

This is good news for Africa, the Nigerian said, because gas has "a big resource base in Nigeria, offshore Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea -- also to some extent in Angola."

"The resource [in Africa] is huge, but so is the challenge of bringing that to the marketplace," and that will involve partnerships with companies and organizations familiar with mobilizing energy resources, Daukoru concluded.

*(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦*



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## United States Continues To Press for Action on Darfur

By Judy Aita  
Washington File United Nations  
Correspondent

United Nations -- Even though it relinquished the Security Council presidency to Argentina on March 1, the United States will continue to push for action on Darfur, senior U.S. officials say.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton said March 1 that he already has discussed Darfur during private consultations with the new Security Council president. The United States, Bolton said, is pushing for a peace-keeping resolution despite Sudan's opposition to expanded U.N. involvement and the African Union's postponement of a final decision on handing off peacekeeping duties to the United Nations.

"We've used the month of our presidency of the Security Council to move this ball forward as fast as we could and as far as we could," State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said February 28. But, he added, it is important "to bring as many people on board as fully as possible and that's going to take time."

With U.N. officials calling the situation in Darfur serious, difficult and problematic, the international community is struggling to find a way to stop the killing of innocent villagers and forge a peace agreement between the government and rebels in the province. During February, the Security Council asked Secretary-General Kofi Annan to begin planning for a large peace-keeping force, which the African Union (AU) said it could not mount.

But the council was unable to authorize a U.N. force by the end of February; it also failed to act on a recommendation by its Sudan



**A displaced Sudanese woman sits outside her makeshift hut in Riyadh camp in the west Darfur region of Sudan. REUTERS/ Antony Njuguna**

Sanctions Committee panel of experts to impose sanctions against individual Sudanese who are blocking a peace agreement or committed gross human rights violations.

### POLITICAL STALEMATE?

Sudan has taken a strong position against the United Nations taking over peacekeeping operations in Darfur, U.N. envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk said at a February 28 press conference at U.N. headquarters. Nevertheless, Pronk said a strong, robust peacekeeping force is needed in Darfur where raiding of villages and killings continue. But with only 7,000 peacekeepers, the AU has neither the troops on the ground nor the resources to do the job.

Describing the situation as a "political stalemate," Pronk said "the climate in Khartoum against

the U.N. is heating up very strongly. There are threats. There are warnings. There is talk about al-Qaida."

The fear, which is being manipulated by the government, is that the transition will not be to the United Nations but a western move to "bring Sudan into the same situation as Iraq a couple of years ago," he said.

When the African Union Peace and Security Council ministers meet March 10, Pronk said, "we do not know whether [they] will re-confirm its decision. That is not certain any more. What was supposed to be a formal political re-confirmation . . . is no longer sure."

Bolton was even less optimistic. "One week postponement now may signal other postponements to come, so each time there is a delay in our ability to do further contingency planning or make decisions on the nature of the force [it] pushes the timeline further out," he said March 1, adding, "That to me is a good reason why the council should not wait, why we should continue to press now to have a vote."

Pronk also said that there is genuine fear that al-Qaida operatives are moving into Sudan to take advantage of the situation, and the risk that "terrorist organizations like al-Qaida also will threaten leaders, governments which they see as sitting in the same quarter as the West or the international community which they despise."

Bolton said that the al-Qaida report "is one reason why we've been talking about the possibility of strengthening the arms embargo or making decisions on sanctions for people who are not facilitating the peace process."♦

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## Sierra Leone Radio Station Brings a Voice to Remote Communities

Washington -- In December 2003, gunfire near the Kailahun district army barracks created panic among residents, still recovering from the trauma of Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war. People rushed to gather belongings and flee into the bush.

After launching a live investigation, Radio Moa promptly broadcast a real time news message that this was an isolated incident, a drunken brawl in fact, and that it

locals who never had a radio station access to good, hard-hitting information on important local and national issues, like elections, HIV/AIDS, land disputes, education, health care, combatant reintegration, the U.N. tribunal and anti-corruption and anti-trafficking programs.

Since it began broadcasting in December 2003, listeners have rigged up old radios or purchased new ones to hear Radio Moa's local-language programs, punctuated by lively African music. In addition to transmitters and other equipment, USAID provided volunteer journalists with bicycles and tape recorders to help them conduct interviews and gather information.

Close to diamond mines and once the epicenter of the war, Kailahun historically has received no news at all. Now, Radio Moa broadcasts over 60-70 kilometers, reaching into both Guinea and Liberia. Within Sierra Leone, news now travels much faster. Says Blama Sandama Kallon, a staff volunteer, "Rather than writing papers for someone to deliver by hand, we can get messages by radio as far as Kenema and Bo" -- two large towns in southeastern Sierra Leone.

Nyuma Amara Samson, a news reader for Radio Moa, says there is

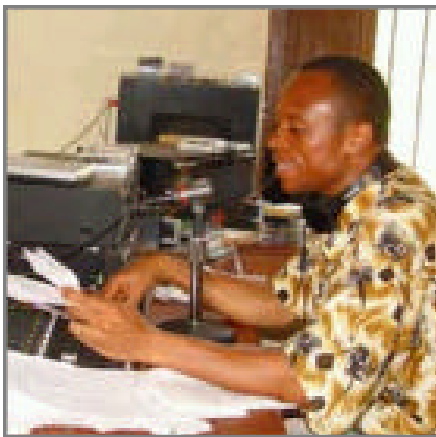
another bonus to the station's public announcements: "People come to meetings and they come on time because they've heard the notice on the radio. This is helping us to be better organized."



**This man in rural Kailahun says he often listens to Radio Moa.**

By giving timely information to traditionally marginalized rural people, Radio Moa also is giving them the power to protect and support their home communities.

*(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U. S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦*



**News reader Nyuma Amara at work in the Ratio Moa Station.**

was safe to stay in the area. That broadcast helped prevent mass flight.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored the construction of Radio Moa in the remote Kailahun district to give

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## Bush Proclaims March 2006 Women's History Month

Praising the achievements of women in fields from social reform to civil rights, in American communities from African American to the American Indian, President Bush proclaimed March 2006 Women's History Month.

Women, the president said, continue to strengthen the United States and the world by excelling as leaders in all walks of life. He called on Americans through appropriate activities and ceremonies to honor the history, accomplishments and contributions of all American women.

The text of the presidential proclamation follows:

(begin text)

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
February 27, 2006

Women's History Month, 2006

A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America

For generations, women across our great land have helped make our country stronger and better. They have improved our communities and played a vital role in achieving justice and equal rights for all our citizens. During Women's History Month, we celebrate the many contributions women make to our society.

At the end of the 19th century, pioneers Jane Addams and Ellen Starr opened the doors of Hull House to serve impoverished and immigrant families in the Chicago

community. Presidential Medal of Freedom winner Annie Dodge Wauneka worked to educate her native Navajo community about preventing and treating disease. In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a city bus in Mont-



Today, the United States of America remains a country that offers the greatest freedom on Earth and believes in the promise of all individuals. Women continue to strengthen our Nation and the world by excelling as leaders in all

walks of life, including business, law, politics, family life, education, community service, science, medicine, and the arts. The brave women who wear the uniform of the United States Armed Forces are helping to lay the foundations of peace and freedom for generations to come. This month, I encourage all Americans to join me in celebrating the extraordinary achievements and contributions of American women.



NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2006 as Women's History Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies and activities to honor the history, accomplishments, and contributions of all American women.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

GEORGE W. BUSH ♦

gomery, Alabama, helping to inspire a nationwide movement for equal justice under the law. Recently, our Nation said goodbye to another remarkable American woman and courageous civil rights leader, Coretta Scott King, who helped call America to its founding ideals.

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## U.S. Celebrates 95th Anniversary of International Women's Day

### U.S. Celebrates 95th Anniversary of International Women's Day

March 8, the 95th anniversary of International Women's Day, is a time to highlight the historical and current contributions that women have made throughout the world, said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"I am proud to honor the diverse contributions of women in advancing the common cause of freedom, justice and equality," Rice said in a statement released March 8 in Washington. "Over the past year, we have witnessed women of courage, compassion, strength and hope playing transformative roles in their societies, inspiring the international community and enriching our world."

Recognizing new women leaders in Chile, Germany and Liberia, and women working to forge democracy throughout the Middle East, Rice said that women have made impressive political gains.

"Women are contributing to and leading democratic change that cannot be stopped," she said. "Many have put their lives at risk to forge free and democratic societies for future generations."

Rice also said the United States continues to support women struggling against political and economic barriers, discrimination and exploitation, such as Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest in Burma.

"Around the world, women of courage are standing up for freedom and human dignity," said Rice. "The United States stands with them."

International Women's Day first was celebrated March 19, 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. According to a United Nations chronology, more than 1 million women and men attended rallies to mark the occasion then. Attendees called for the right of women "to vote and to hold public office, the right to work, to vocational training and to an end to job discrimination."

From those early years, International Women's Day has grown into the international women's movement, which has been strengthened by several United Nations women's conferences. Each has helped make the commemoration a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's social, political and economic rights.

Women around the world continue to celebrate International Women's Day, and in many countries it is a national holiday.

In the United States, President Bush has proclaimed the entire month of March as Women's History Month, and celebrations commemorating the struggle for equality will take place throughout the country. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/Archive/2006/Mar/02-282945.html>).)

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, for example, celebrated the achievements of the first woman U.S. Supreme Court justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, at a March 7 National Women's History Month Celebration in Washington.

O'Connor, who retired in January, "helped build a community of women attracted to the law and to

public service," Gonzales said. "Her greatest legacy lies not in the opinions of the Supreme Court, but in the spirits of hope burning brightly in the hearts of generations of American women."

For more information on women's rights, see Democracy Dialogues: Women's Rights ([http://www.democracy.gov/dd/eng\\_democracy\\_dialogues/womens\\_rights.html](http://www.democracy.gov/dd/eng_democracy_dialogues/womens_rights.html)).

For additional information on U.S. observances of International Women's Day and Women's History Month, see Women in the United States ([http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history\\_geography\\_and\\_population/population\\_and\\_diversity/women\\_in\\_the\\_us.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity/women_in_the_us.html)).

Following is the text of Rice's statement on International Women's Day:

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesman  
For Immediate Release  
March 8, 2006

### STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE

International Women's Day,  
March 8, 2006

As we observe International Women's Day 2006, I am proud to honor the diverse contributions of women in advancing the common cause of freedom, justice, and equality. Over the past year, we have witnessed women of courage, compassion, strength, and hope playing transformative roles

*(Continued on page 13)*



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## Bush Says Women's Empowerment Strengthens Emerging Democracies

President Bush pledged that the United States will “help women stand up for their freedom no matter where they live,” saying the full and equal participation of women in civic and political life has strengthened democracies around the world.

Speaking March 7 at a White House event celebrating International Women’s Day and Women’s History Month in the United States, Bush said that the current condition of women’s rights around the world call for “a firm conviction in our beliefs that all people are created equal.

“There’s no doubt in my mind, empowering women in new democracies will make those democracies better countries and help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come,” Bush said.

The president thanked and welcomed delegations of Iraqi and Afghan women who had been invited to Washington. In Afghanistan, he said women have started to “breathe that beautiful air of a free society,” after years of oppression under the Taliban, and he noted that Iraqi women will hold 25 percent of their country’s legislative seats under the new government.

“The United States is working to increase opportunities for women

in these two emerging democracies,” he said, by providing funds through the Iraqi Women’s Democracy Initiative to train women in political leadership and democratic institutions, and helping Afghan women join the political process with advocacy and communication skills. (See Women in Iraq and Rebuilding Afghanistan.)

“It breaks our hearts, our collective hearts, to realize many young girls are sold into sex slavery and we will use our prestige to stop that evil process,” he said.

Bush also said his administration will continue to fight the transmission of HIV/AIDS, which he said disproportionately affects women and children.



**President Bush joins in the celebration of International Women's Day at the White House Tuesday, March 7, 2006. White House photo by Shealah Craighead.**

The president referred to strong women in American history, such as Susan B. Anthony, Alice Stone Blackwell, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Rosa Parks, whose leadership “changed the course of our nation’s history” to help make the United States a more equal and better place, and whose leadership have led women to now be able to shape their country in areas ranging from physics, busi-

ness and the military. However, Bush said many women “are still struggling for basic rights,” in many other countries, specifically mentioning Iran, North Korea and Burma.

He said the United States will support courageous reformers around the world such as Burma’s Aung San Suu Kyi, and will seek to end sexual exploitation and trafficking in women and young girls. (See U.S. Support for Democracy in Burma.)

ness and the military.

For additional information on U.S. observances of International Women’s Day and Women’s History Month, see Women in the United States.

*(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦*

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## Iraqi, Afghan Women in Washington To See U.S. Democracy Firsthand

By Michael Jay Friedman  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Female leaders from Iraq and Afghanistan, including parliamentarians, non-governmental organization leaders and ministerial-level officials, were welcomed to Washington March 6 by Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky.

The delegations, visiting March 6 through March 9, will participate in a program of consultations and training opportunities in support of the 2006 International Women's Day theme, "Women in Politics/Women and Political Participation."

The president and first lady Laura Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes are among U.S. policymakers who will meet with the Afghan and Iraqi woman leaders.

On International Women's Day, March 8, each visiting delegate will be paired with a member of the U.S. Congress, and will have the opportunity to observe as that member engages in the strategizing, compromising and consensus-building that characterizes democratic lawmaking.

Other events are scheduled at the Heritage Foundation, a private non-profit Washington policy research organization, the World Bank and state and local officials. The Afghan delegates will dine at the Maryland Governor's Mansion in Annapolis, Maryland. The Iraqis



**Dilbar Nazari (center), member of the Afghani Wolesi Jirga, raises her hand as her name is called in the Maryland State Senate. Habiba Hanesh (left) and Nasrin Parsa stand by. (State Dept. photo - Janine Sides)**



**Nasrin Parsa, member of the Afghani Meshrano Jirga (State Dept. photo - Janine Sides)**

will meet with local officials in Virginia and observe a town council meeting.

In welcoming the delegations March 6, Dobriansky said "each and every one of you represents a new democratic era in your respective countries."

Dobriansky urged the Iraqi and Afghan women to speak out forcefully during their meeting with Secretary Rice, scheduled for later on March 6. The secretary, she said, is keenly interested in the delegates' views on a number of subjects, including how best to bridge religious and political divides.

Observing that the individual delegates represent divergent points of view, Dobriansky said, "Having different points of view ... is to us what really makes democracy strong."

First observed worldwide in 1911 (a U.S. version dates to 1909), International Women's Day is commemorated by the United Nations and is observed in many countries as a national holiday. It represents an opportunity to reflect on progress made toward achieving legal equality between men and women, and affords a time to celebrate ordinary women's acts of courage and determination in the effort to secure fully women's rights.

For additional information on U.S. observances of International Women's Day and Women's History Month, see Women in the United States ([http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history\\_geography\\_and\\_population/population\\_and\\_diversity/women\\_in\\_the\\_us.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity/women_in_the_us.html)).

*(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦*

## Human Rights Reports Key to U.S. Foreign Policy, Official Says

The State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices are especially important to advancing U.S. foreign policy goals, says Barry F. Lowenkron, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor.

"It gives a very good picture of the human rights practices of each country," Lowenkron said in a March 6 interview with the Washington File.

"This is important because the United States carries out a foreign policy that has a strong human rights component to it. That has been part of the fabric of the nation. Congress mandated this well over 30 years ago."

The annual human rights reports are congressionally mandated by a 1976 amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, which requires the secretary of state to transmit to Congress "a full and complete report regarding the status of internationally recognized human rights" in countries receiving U.S. security assistance.

Following the report's delivery to the U.S. Congress, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is scheduled to present the reports to the public at a press briefing on March 8. The report examines the status of human rights in 2005 in 196 countries. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=20060306120322maduobba0.7105982&t=dhr/hr-latest.html>).)

Lowenkron said the increasing trend of governments regulating nongovernmental organization



**Barry F. Lowenkron**  
**Assistant Secretary of State for**  
**democracy, human rights and labor**

(NGO) activity, such as the new NGO law in Russia, and censoring Internet content, especially in China, is of particular concern.

"The problem with the NGO law is it tries to do something that is antithetical to democracy. It's democracy top-down," Lowenkron said of the law signed by President Vladimir Putin on January 10. The law increases the Russian government's oversight of the registration, financing and activities of NGOs in Russia. The United States is concerned that the new Russian law will be used to hinder the work of NGOs. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Feb/08-245680.html>).)

The U.S. focus on the issue of Internet censorship is not going to go away, Lowenkron said.

"I have told my Chinese counterparts that there is tremendous public interest as well as congressional interest in it in the United States," he said.

The assistant secretary said the newly formed Global Internet Freedom Task Force, chaired by Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky and Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs Josette Shiner, including State Department officials in international communications policy, human rights, democracy, business advocacy and corporate responsibility, will be working with U.S. businesses, NGOs, the European Union and other governments to address Internet freedom issues.

The task force will make recommendations to Secretary Rice on policy and diplomatic initiatives, Lowenkron said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=February&x=20060214161400bcrek-law3.503054e-02&t=xarchives/xarchitem.html>).)

For more information on the reports and U.S. policy, see Human Rights ([http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human\\_rights.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights.html)).

*(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦*

# Peace Corps Celebrates 45 Years of Service to Developing Nations

By Jim Fisher-Thompson and John Cox  
Washington File Staff Writers

Washington -- At a time when some perceive a widening rift between the West's emphasis on modernity and developing nations' desire to maintain traditional values, the Peace Corps, for more than 45 years, has been in the forefront of helping people struggle out of poverty while mirroring traditional American values of democracy and fair play.

Far from being quaint beliefs, those are the same traditions that motivated the thousands of Americans who answered the call first made by President John F. Kennedy when he established the volunteer agency in 1961.

At that time the youthful president -- he was only 44 -- challenged young Americans to impart some of the blessings of freedom they enjoyed as citizens of the most prosperous nation in the world to less fortunate people beyond American shores. And they responded overwhelmingly.

Since its founding, more than 185,000 Americans have answered the call and devoted two years to living and working in communities as teachers, health care workers, and agricultural and small business advisers in places like Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Kenya, the Philippines, China, Turkey and Poland.



Former volunteers include five current members of the U.S. House of Representatives and one senator, all of whom were honored by Peace Corps Director Gaddi

El Salvador, 1965-1967; Representative Thomas Petri (Republican of Wisconsin), Somalia, 1966-1967; Representative Christopher Shays (Republican of Connecticut), Fiji, 1968-1970; and Representative James Walsh (Republican of New York), Nepal, 1970-1972.

Two other lawmakers received public service awards for their long-term support of the Peace Corps: House Committee on International Relations Chairman Henry Hyde (Republican of Illinois) and Subcommittee on Foreign Operations Chairman Jim Kolbe (Republican of Arizona).

Representatives from 35 of the 75 nations in which Peace Corps volunteers currently work attended the ceremony.

**PEACE CORPS  
"MORE VITAL THAN  
EVER"**

In presenting the awards, Vasquez said: "Today's Peace Corps is more vital

than ever before. The Peace Corps is truly an agency that makes a lasting impression. After the experience of being a Peace Corps volunteer, countless individuals remain in public service, giving back to their country."

In part, because of the support of former alumni in Congress and government, Vasquez said the Peace Corps is "at a 30-year high" with the number of volunteers in



**President John Kennedy gives a personal farewell message to 80 Peace Corps volunteers in the White House Rose Garden Aug. 28, 1961, before their departure the following day for assignments in Africa. (AP Photo/William J. Smith, File)**

Vasquez, who presented them with Peace Corps public service awards during a ceremony in Washington March 1.

The recipients were: Senator Christopher Dodd (Democrat of Connecticut), who served in the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic from 1966 to 1968; Representative Sam Farr (Democrat of California), Colombia, 1964-1966; Representative Michael Honda (Democrat of California),

*(Continued on page 21)*

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## U.S. Official Praises African Union's Counterterrorism Efforts . . .

*(Continued from page 1)*

Crompton told conference participants that because of the international community's gains against terrorists, al-Qaida and other groups would continue to seek out new safe havens in unstable corners of the world.

He called on TSCI participants, meeting to exchange information and develop counterterrorism policy recommendations, to consider the root causes of terrorism.

"In a society where a lack of freedom destroys hope, individuals sometimes feel they are justified to

lash out in rage and frustration at those they believe responsible for their plight," said Crompton.

As such, he said, the TSCI must focus on both "destructive" attacks on terrorists as well as "constructive" efforts to nurture democracy because "systems that are characterized by an absence of political choice, transparent governance, economic opportunities and personal freedoms can create incubators for extremism."

Ultimately, Crompton concluded, denying terrorists safe haven requires a regional response from the

TSCI, that "incorporates all the tools of governance: to attack the enemy, deny safe haven and to address the socio-economic-political needs of these safe havens."

For more information, see Response to Terrorism ([http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international\\_security/terrorism.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html)).

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## U.S. Celebrates 95th Anniversary of International Women's Day . . .

*(Continued from page 8)*

in their societies, inspiring the international community, and enriching our world.

Around the globe, women are making impressive political gains. In countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, and throughout the broader Middle East, women are contributing to and leading democratic change that cannot be stopped. Many have put their lives at risk to forge free and democratic societies for future generations. Today more women than ever before have the right to vote. More women are running for office, and many have been elected as leaders in their countries. In Liberia, Chile, and Germany, for the first time women have been elected to their country's highest office.

Even as we celebrate the fact that more women have taken their rightful place in society, we must also recognize that there is still much to be done. In too many parts of the world women still struggle for basic liberties under governments that tolerate discrimination, systematic abuse, exploitation, and violence against women. We must not accept women being sold into sexual slavery, terrorized by rape, denied an education, killed for so-called "honor crimes", or silenced for speaking out. We are resolved to remove the barriers to political, economic, and social empowerment so that women everywhere may freely chart their own way.

This week we honor brave women such as Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest in

Burma. Her efforts to bring democracy are a source of inspiration to women around the world. We must not forget that the advance of women's rights and the advance of human liberty go hand in hand. Around the world, women of courage are standing up for freedom and human dignity. The United States stands with them.

(end text)

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## Global Talents Take Honors at 78th U.S. Film Industry Awards

By Michael J. Bandler  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Filmmaking talent from around the globe convened in Los Angeles on March 5 to learn the results of America's pre-eminent movie competition -- the Academy Awards, known as Oscars, presented by the U.S. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The envelopes with winners'

names for the 78th annual event contained a number of names from abroad. Those names and the roster of nominees underscore the fact that the U.S. film industry -- rather than being a monolith -- actually is quite decentralized, with independently financed films a solid segment of the mix. Capote, a glimpse at an episode in the life of novelist-essayist Truman

Capote, and Good Night, and Good Luck, a depiction of a critical moment in the career of television correspondent

Edward R. Murrow, are two examples of relatively low-budget movies shaped outside the U.S. film studio system that found welcome audiences in 2005.

As for artists from overseas, on the list of winners was director Ang Lee, a native of Pingtung, Taiwan, honored for his craftsmanship at the helm of Brokeback Mountain, a study of the an

guished connected lives of two Wyoming shepherders.

Yet surprisingly to some, Lee's film -- the putative front-runner -- did not take "best motion picture" honors. That statuette went to Crash, an examination of the complexities of racial tolerance told through intersecting story lines in Los Angeles. Its director, Canadian-born Paul Haggis, took original screenplay honors with a

41&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html).)

The film year just past was one in which global settings played major parts in films by established American filmmakers. Woody Allen went to London for his first film shot overseas, Match Point. Rob Marshall, who won an Oscar in 2003 for Chicago, traveled to the Far East for his film adaptation of Arthur Golden's Memoirs of a Geisha. Director Peter Jackson, a who won the best direction Oscar for 2003 for The

Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, shot segments of his 2005 remake of King Kong in his native New Zealand. The film won awards at the 2006 Oscar ceremonies for visual effects, sound editing and sound, with a number of foreign-born talents on Jackson's team taking home statuettes. Steven Spielberg's political thriller, Munich, was shot in several locations abroad, as were other popular films, including Syriana and The Constant Gardener.

His performance in Syriana gained best supporting actor honors for George Clooney, as a U.S. intelligence operative in the Middle East. And in the cast of Brazilian director Fernando Meirelles' The Constant Gardener, British-born Rachel Weisz won the best supporting actress trophy for her role as a diplomat's wife pursuing a controversial agenda in Africa.



**Cast members of the foreign film 'Tsotsi' from South Africa Terry Pheto, Presley Chweneyagae (L) and director Gavin Hood (R) attend the Vanity Fair Oscars party after the 78th Academy Awards in Hollywood, California March 5, 2006. REUTERS/Phil McCarten**

co-author, Robert Moresco.

South African attorney-turned-filmmaker Gavin Hood received the award for best foreign film of 2005 for Tsotsi, a thriller based on an Athol Fugard novel about a Johannesburg gang leader who reassesses his life under dire circumstances. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-engish&y=2006&m=March&x=200603021808361HecuoR0.32209>

(Continued on page 15)

## Global Talents Take Honors at 78th U.S. Film Industry Awards . . .

(Continued from page 14)

Oscar winners also were found among the men and women behind the cameras. Australian Dion Beebe won the cinematography award for his work shooting *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Pitted against fellow composers from Spain and Italy, as well as the oft-honored American musician John Williams, Argentina's Gustavo Santaolalla received the Oscar for his lush, evocative score for *Brokeback Mountain*. Martin McDonagh, British-born playwright-screenwriter of Irish parentage, gained "short film, live action" honors for writing and directing *Six Shooter*, an Irish comedy about a chance encounter on a train.

Two audience favorites of 2005 -- created by talents from abroad -- won Oscars. Director Nick Park, a previous Oscar winner for two animated shorts featuring an inventor named Wallace and his canine pal Gromit, joined with writer-director Steve Box to bring the fanciful duo back in a full-length feature, *Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*. It took the prize for best animated feature. In the documentary category, the winner was *March of the Penguins*, the imaginative creation of the French team of Luc Jacquet and Yves Darondeau.

Over the decades, the American movie industry has been dominated by the "majors" -- studios such as Paramount, 20th Century Fox and Universal. As mergers and takeovers have brought these and other studios under corporate conglomerate umbrellas, boutique

studios -- Focus Features, Lions Gate Entertainment and Paramount Classics among them -- have arisen within the larger parent groupings.



**Best director winner Taiwanese Ang Lee poses with his Oscar at the 78th annual Academy Awards in Hollywood, March 5, 2006. Lee won for his work on 'Brokeback Mountain.' Taiwanese news media praised Lee's artistic achievement, noting that his marriage might be a source of inspiration for his many romance films.**

These smaller arms, and a vast number of homegrown companies that beg and borrow to amass the funds needed for production, have become more visible, and more potent, over the years. Nominees in the major categories this Oscar season, and several of the winners, were drawn from productions such as *Capote*, *Junebug*, *The*

*Squid and the Whale* and *Good Night, and Good Luck*.

Following are the winners of Academy Awards for films released in 2005 in major categories:

- Best Motion Picture, *Crash*;
- Best Actor (leading role), Philip Seymour Hoffman, *Capote*;
- Best Actress (leading role), Reese Witherspoon, *Walk the Line*;
- Best Actor (supporting role), George Clooney, *Syriana*;
- Best Actress (supporting role), Rachel Weisz, *The Constant Gardener*;
- Best Director, Ang Lee, *Brokeback Mountain*;
- Best Original Screenplay, Paul Haggis, Robert Moresco, *Crash*;
- Best Adapted Screenplay, Larry McMurtry, Diana Ossana, *Brokeback Mountain*;
- Best Cinematography, Dion Beebe, *Memoirs of a Geisha*;
- Best Foreign Language Film, *Tsotsi*, South Africa;
- Best Documentary Feature, *March of the Penguins*;
- Best Animated Feature: Wallace & Gromit in "The Curse of the Were-Rabbit"; and
- Best Film Score: Gustavo Santaolalla, *Brokeback Mountain*.

A complete list of nominees and winners, past and present, is available on the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (<http://www.oscars.org/78academyawards/index.html>) Web site.

*(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦*

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## America Will Lead World to Victory Against Terrorism, Cheney Says

Vice president pledges to stop Iranian nuclear weapon, expresses support for Iranian people

Washington -- The best hope against terrorism and the spread of nuclear weapons is the continued commitment of America and its allies to expanding freedom throughout the world, says Vice President Cheney.

"The terrorists have declared war on the civilized world, and America will lead the civilized world to victory," the vice president told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee March 7.

Cheney said that terrorists aim to seize control of a country from which they can start destabilizing an entire region.

As in Afghanistan, Cheney said, "They seek to impose a dictatorship of fear, under which every man, woman, and child lives in total obedience to a narrow, hateful ideology.

"The terrorists have targeted people of every nationality and every religious faith, including Muslims who disagree with them," said Cheney, adding, "The war on terror is a fight against evil; victory in this war will be a victory for

peaceful men and women of every religious faith."

Their ultimate goal, he said, is to acquire chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons for use in future attacks. (See related article.)



Vice President Dick Cheney delivers his remarks to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Tuesday, March 7, 2006 in Washington. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

Calling the government in Iran one of the world's primary state sponsors of terror, Cheney said, "We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon."

As the International Atomic Energy Agency meets to deliberate on Iran's nuclear program, Cheney said the "international community

is prepared to impose meaningful consequences" if Iran continues to seek nuclear weapons. (See related article.)

However, the vice president expressed America's support of the Iranian people. "The people of Iran," he said, "can be absolutely certain that we respect them, their country, and their long history as a great civilization -- and we stand with them.

"Freedom in the Middle East requires freedom for the Iranian people," Cheney said, "and America looks forward to the day when our nation can be the closest of friends with a free and democratic Iran."

For additional information, see Response to Terrorism, Iraq Update, and Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U. S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

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## Violence Will Not Stop Iraq's Democratic Process, Rumsfeld Says

Washington – Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says individuals who are fomenting violence in Iraq are doing so “to stop the formation of a new government,” but they will not succeed.

When innocent civilians are killed by violence it is always stunning, shocking and heartbreaking, but the secretary said the reality is that Iraq has been “a violent part of the world for a good long time, and what we’re seeing there now is a conscious effort by the terrorists and the insurgents to incite civil war and sectarian violence.”

In a March 2 radio interview in Missouri, Rumsfeld said that previous attempts by instigators to derail security, political and economic progress in Iraq have failed, and he predicted additional efforts would end up the same.

Rumsfeld said the commander of multinational forces in Iraq told him March 2 that Iraqi Ministry of Defense forces had “conducted themselves exceedingly well” in the wake of the February 22 attack on the Golden Mosque in Samarra. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Feb/22-921703.html>).)

Army General George Casey told reporters in Baghdad March 3 that Iraqi security forces performed generally -- although not uniformly -- well across the country since the attack on that mosque and more than two dozen attacks on other mosques since then. Several of the mosques were damaged severely, he said, while fewer than 10 others experienced only moderate damage.

Casey returned to Iraq’s capital following an inspection of coalition operations along the Syrian border March 2 and said a layered security approach there has reduced the influx of foreign fighters as well as suicide bombers.

After the Samarra mosque attack, Casey said it took a few days for Iraqi security forces -- with coalition support -- to settle the volatile situation in cities such as Basra and Baghdad, but elsewhere Iraqi Army and police forces were faster to cope with demonstrations and activity by private militias.

Casey said the leaders of Iraqi security forces “took the initiative early on in moving to full alert and securing key sites.” This, he said, “demonstrates a maturing capability to cooperate and operate effectively in providing domestic order.”

What happened in Samarra and elsewhere, the commander said, was a deliberate effort “to foment sectarian strife at a very sensitive time in Iraq’s political development.” Asking rhetorically if the violence is out of control, Casey answered his own question by saying, “clearly not.”

While he suggested that the immediate crisis in Iraq has passed, Casey also said there is still a threat of additional attacks “by those who will stop at nothing to undermine the formation” of a constitutionally elected, national unity government representing all Iraqis. “Iraqis have again risen to the occasion against the terror that is designed to deny them their future,” he said.

But Casey said sectarian tensions continue, requiring Iraqi and coalition

forces to enhance security at key religious sites.

Asked about reported problems posed by private Iraqi militias, the U.S. general said there have been reports in Baghdad of Iraqi security forces assisting militias, and he indicated that this was an issue that the Iraqi government must address quickly. In the near term, he said the government would have to disarm the militias and integrate members into some of its ministries.

Casey also said that in most cases where militias encountered direct challenges from Iraqi security forces, militia members yielded to authority without much further violence. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=20060302170732idybeekcm0.6780359&t=is/is-latest.html>).)

He said the role of U.S. forces is to degrade the insurgency sufficiently so that the increasingly capable security forces can contain it by themselves. “I think we’ll continue that role here over the course of the next year,” he added.

Transcripts of the Casey briefing (<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2006/tr20060303-12601.html>) and Rumsfeld interview (<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2006/tr20060302-12599.html>) are available on the Defense Department Web site.

For more information see International Security (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/>) and Iraq Update ([http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle\\_east\\_north\\_africa/iraq.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html)). ♦

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## International Cooperation Brings Success in War on Drugs

By Charlene Porter  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Steadily increasing cooperation among nations led to “significant successes” in reducing international drug trafficking and criminal activity in 2005, the U.S. State Department declared in releasing the 2006 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) March 1.

Assistant Secretary of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Anne Patterson announced the findings at a State Department briefing.

“The progress we can point to in this year’s INCSR reflects the work of many countries to consolidate the gains against drugs and crime, with many brave people throughout the world taking great personal risk.”

### ANDEAN NATIONS

The elimination of more than 170,000 hectares of coca crops – the source of cocaine – in Colombia was among the achievements cited in the report. Reducing coca cultivation has been one of the uppermost goals of U.S. countertrafficking efforts.

Crop eradication in Colombia has worked in tandem with Plan Colombia, a U.S.-backed effort to assist the nation in controlling drug trafficking, crime and corruption. Patterson, who served as ambassador to Colombia from 2000 to 2003 when the program was taking hold, said it has led to “enormous progress” in strengthening institutions in Colombia, reducing crime and improving the nation’s overall stability.

Also in the Andean region, Patterson said Bolivia has made similar progress compared to where it was 10 years ago. Still, the report finds that Bolivian coca cultivation has been creeping up for the last four years, by 8 percent in 2005 alone. The trend is described as “disquieting” in the report itself, but Patterson said she does not find it surprising.

“Eradication is messy,” Patterson told reporters “because people don’t want to have their crop eradicated, so we can’t underestimate the difficulty of this.”



She said counternarcotics efforts are a key component in the bilateral relations between the United States and Bolivia.

### EXTRADITION AND INTERDICTION

Progress in institution building and quashing corruption has yielded growing numbers of criminal extraditions, according to the INCSR. Colombia extradited 134 people to the United States for prosecution in 2005, and Mexico 41. Afghanistan also permitted the extradition of one of its citizens to a foreign country for prosecution on drug charges in 2005.

Interdiction of drug contraband is also cited as an area of progress in

2005. The amount of cocaine seized in the Western Hemisphere in 2005 exceeded all records, with 228 metric tons of cocaine taken in Colombia alone. Almost 330 metric tons -- with an estimated street value of \$33 billion -- were seized by nations throughout the region in 2005.

### BACKGROUND

U.S. law requires the State Department to prepare the INCSR annually -- a country-by-country survey that describes efforts to attack all aspects of the international drug trade, chemical control, money laundering and financial crimes. INCSR 2006 is the 23rd edition of the report.

These findings will inform a decision President Bush will make later in the year, another action required by law. Based on the INCSR information, the president will decide whether nations that have been identified as major illicit drug producing and/or drug-transit countries are taking adequate strides to address their problems in keeping with U.N. conventions.

The following nations are identified as illicit drug producing and/or drug-transit countries in the 2006 INCSR: Afghanistan, The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela.

The full text of the two-volume 2006 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (<http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2006/index.htm>) is available on the Department of State Web site. ♦



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## U.S. Health Secretary Says More Bird Flu Vaccines Coming

Washington -- U.S. health agencies are continuing to develop vaccine alternatives that will protect against the evolving avian influenza virus, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt said March 6.

In 2005, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) successfully tested a vaccine that produced an immune response to one strain of the H5N1 virus that swept out of Southeast Asia, through Central Asia and into Europe and Africa.

That vaccine was developed from a sample of the H5N1 viral strain collected in Vietnam. As the virus has continued to spread through bird populations in wider areas, however, it has changed. Vaccines must change too.

"In order to be prepared, we need to continue to develop new vaccines," said Leavitt at a medical conference focused on immunization.

The health secretary said U.S. and international research partners are working to create "seed viruses," or reference strains, of candidate viruses that are used in vaccine manufacture.

"The H5N1 virus has continued to [evolve] over the past 18 months. We continue to monitor its evolution," Leavitt said. "We will have seed viruses reflecting this drift that can be quickly available for vaccine testing and production."

Leavitt said researchers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have worked to keep pace with the transconti-

ental travels of H5N1 as it has migrated out of its Asian point of emergence since 2003.

"The CDC has developed another seed virus similar to the virus now circulating in parts of Asia, Europe and Africa," Leavitt said.

After successful human testing conducted by NIAID and research



**Michael Leavitt, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services**

partners showed that the first trial vaccine was effective, production began, creating a stockpile now of 8 million doses.

The fear is that the vaccine could be ineffective if the virus has mutated significantly from the sample on which the serum was based.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 175 human cases of H5N1 infection have been detected since 2003, resulting in 95 deaths. All but one of the victims became infected, experts say, through direct contact with sick birds and their environs.

H5N1 does not transmit efficiently to humans in its current form, but if it does develop that capability, a global flu pandemic could result, experts warn.

Since the disease began spreading rapidly out of Asia in mid-2005, the international community has responded to the warnings and mobilized an effort to help bolster disease detection and surveillance in developing countries.

Surveillance of bird populations and stamping out infection when detected is considered the most effective way to stop the disease and prevent its movement into humans.

The United States has been a leader in mobilizing that international effort, and is the largest single donor to support anti-disease campaigns in other countries, having committed more than \$330 million to various programs. (See related article. (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Mar/02-321212.html>))

For additional information on the disease and efforts to combat it, see Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) ([http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/bird\\_flu.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html)).

The full text (<http://www.hhs.gov/news/speech/2006/060306.html>) of Leavitt's prepared remarks is available on the department's Web site.

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## United States, Partners Build Global Disease Surveillance

By Charlene Porter  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The United States' efforts to protect its citizens from deadly pandemic influenza will be only as successful as its efforts to protect citizens of other nations from the avian influenza.

The bird flu virus H5N1 has now appeared in birds some 30 nations.

"The best defense of the United States is what we do internationally," said Kent Hill, assistant administrator for global health at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in testimony before a U.S. House Appropriations subcommittee March 2.

Explaining the potential for avian influenza to escalate rapidly into a lethal, fast-moving human disease, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Julie Gerberding said, "We are only as strong as our weakest link."

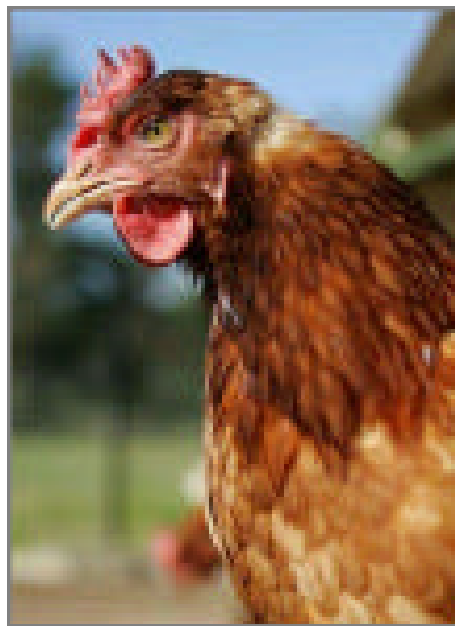
The warning made an impression on members of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Subcommittee.

"That's disturbing," said Representative Don Sherwood, a Pennsylvania Republican. "There are places in the world where [pandemic influenza] could get a pretty good head start on us and we wouldn't know it."

The United States, working in partnership with other nations, has undertaken a variety of initiatives to help improve the capability for

disease surveillance and detection in other nations in a shared strategy that has emerged from a series of international meetings over the last six months.

USAID is responsible for distribution of more than \$150 million in assistance to improve disease containment capabilities in other nations, Hill said. He showed the committee a flat cellophane packet called a PPE — personal protective equipment. USAID has sent 20,000 of the packets abroad, with another 1 million now on order.



"This packet contains gloves, masks, suits, goggles, disinfectant," Hill said. "We're trying to get this type of thing out quickly," so that the supplies can be put to immediate use to protect workers conducting a poultry culling operation after detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

### BIRD FLU VIRUS MOVING STEADILY WESTWARD

The dangerous H5N1 avian influenza virus has become endemic in birds in Asia and has been moving steadily westward. It also can infect humans, and the World Health Organization has documented 174 cases over the last two years, resulting in 94 deaths. Direct contact between humans and ailing poultry has been determined to be the cause of all but one of those cases.

Health officials warn that the virus could mutate to become easily transmissible to and among humans. That might lead to pandemic influenza with the potential to cause millions of deaths and widespread social and economic turmoil. As more and more birds are exposed in more and more places, the opportunities for that mutation to occur increase.

The earliest possible detection and elimination of infection in birds are considered the best strategy for pandemic prevention. Since the appearance of H5N1 in Nigeria in February, Hill said USAID has worked to recruit and train local organizations that have helped wage the battle against polio now to become involved in bird flu surveillance.

Unusual fatalities among birds were spotted in Nigeria in January, Hill said, but initially were misdiagnosed and attributed to another less serious disease.

*(Continued on page 21)*

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United States, Partners Build Global Disease  
Surveillance . . .

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The anecdote demonstrates that capable surveillance is a problem, and the international assistance effort is just beginning a long process to upgrade it, Hill said.

In Cambodia, Gerberding said, CDC is using a similar strategy to solicit the help of ordinary people. Every village now has a veterinarian's aide who has been trained to spot sick birds; each is equipped with a cell phone to call regional or national health authorities if signs of disease start appearing in backyard poultry.

Members of the appropriations subcommittee, who will be influential in future spending decisions on bird flu overseas assistance, expressed concern about whether current U.S. plans will do enough to help build disease surveillance and contain-

ment. About \$6.5 million now is earmarked for assistance to Africa, and some members questioned whether that amount will be adequate now that outbreaks have been detected in animals in both Nigeria and Niger.

Leaders of U.S. government health agencies acknowledged that review of the plan will be an ongoing task, requiring constant vigilance.

For additional information on the disease and efforts to combat it, see Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) ([http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/bird\\_flu.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html)).

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Peace Corps Celebrates 45 Years of Service to Developing Nations . . .

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the field -- 7,810 at the end of fiscal year 2005.

Twenty-four percent of those volunteers are working in predominantly Muslim countries, he told his audience.

Vasquez said the "Volunteers are building bonds of friendship and finding common ways to address global challenges, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic."

Crisis Corps Volunteers, consisting of many returned PCVs, were also deployed in 2005 to Sri Lanka and Thailand to assist with rebuilding tsunami devastated areas, the director said.

Representative Farr, an award recipient, marked the anniversary stating, "When I was still a college

student, I distinctly remembering hearing President Kennedy's call to service: 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.' Moved by the president's enthusiasm, I responded by joining" and was assigned to Colombia.

There, he said, "I focused on community development in a poor barrio in Medellin, working to organize my barrio and trying to help Colombians help themselves. I believe I made a positive impact on the lives of my Colombian co-workers, neighbors and friends, and I know the experience was key to the rest of my career in public service."

Vasquez concluded the Capitol Hill ceremony by reading a letter of congratulations from President Bush.

"The true strength of America lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens," Bush said in the letter.

"For more than four decades, the men and women of the Peace Corps have demonstrated the compassion of our country by reaching out to those in need and spreading hope. Your work helps foster a culture of responsibility and citizenship and advances international understanding and good will."

More information (<http://www.peacecorps.gov/>) on the Peace Corps is available on its Web site.

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